

Caroline Clement

The Hidden Life of Mazo de la Roche's Collaborator

“In privacy I can find myself and the creative impulse in me can move unhampered,” said Mazo de la Roche in a 1955 interview. Finding the truth about the author of the phenomenally successful *Jalna* novels has been difficult, for she herself was reticent and evasive. Even the best biographer of de la Roche, Ronald Hambleton, made mistakes: for example, he missed the Acton years. Joan Givner uncovered the Acton years, but one aspect of her *Mazo de la Roche: The Hidden Life* was terribly wrong: de la Roche was not a child molester who victimized her cousin and life-long companion Caroline Clement.¹ De la Roche herself had said in her autobiography, *Ringing the Changes*, that she and Clement were “raised together as sisters,” but Givner, guessing at Clement’s age, contradicted this statement saying “Caroline was much more likely to have found in Mazo a surrogate parent than a playmate her own age” (18). De la Roche had said that the two women first met and began engaging in their innocent “play” when de la Roche was seven years old and Clement was about the same age (3–9, 51–59). Givner, however, insisted that “Caroline was probably a child of seven and Mazo a young woman in her mid-teens” when the two women came together. Furthermore, Givner pronounced, the play was “erotic” (49–54). Givner implied that Clement was hiding de la Roche’s crime when she became a “willing collaborator” in giving incorrect dates of birth for the two of them. Givner also implied that Clement was a mindless follower (17, 18) or a pitiful blackmailer exerting “some kind of control over Mazo and her work” (3). The truth is that de la Roche was younger than Clement, and the two met when de la Roche said they did. Moreover, Clement was the leader of the pair

and a respected, honourable partner in the creation of the Jalna series. The more one learns about Clement, the more one learns about de la Roche.

Mazo de la Roche claimed that Caroline Clement's mother married "the most affluent young man of the neighbourhood," the "eldest son" of "Squire Clement" of United Empire Loyalist stock (*Ringling* 19). This statement was ambiguous. Actually Clement's father was not an eldest child but a second-born with eight younger siblings.² And Clement's father was not rich, only her grandfather was. Grandfather Clement had personal property and cash valued at well over 7000 dollars by the time he died in 1873, an enormous sum for the time; furthermore, like Captain Philip Whiteoak, the grandfather in the Jalna series, he also owned about 1000 acres of land (Clement, Lewis James). De la Roche probably repressed such details in order to hide the many ways that Caroline Clement's family—combined with the family of de la Roche—provided material for the Jalna series (Kirk). Grandfather Clement's land was located at the south end of Innisfil Township, Simcoe County, Ontario, where Lewis James and his wife Abigail had arrived in 1829 from Niagara to settle on 200 acres granted by the Crown. Lewis James Clement had been born in Canada, as had his wife. His father, another James, a descendant of early Dutch settlers of New York State, had been an officer in the British army and one of the first settlers of the Canadian Niagara Peninsula. This great-grandfather James Clement had been a hero of the War of 1812, as had other members of the family.³ De la Roche also said that Squire Clement "did very well" by his eldest son, but that the son was "unable to settle down with his young bride. He was full of ideas which invariably cost money, ideas which carried him and his wife far afield before fruition evaporated" (19). This statement was too kind. The younger James Clement was harum-scarum. He changed jobs frequently, borrowed money compulsively, and failed his dependents badly.

Before his third child Caroline was born, James Clement worked as a farmer, storekeeper, justice of the peace, and innkeeper in Simcoe County.⁴ He also trained show horses and exhibited them in New York State (Hambleton, *Mazo* 112). In 1852 James bought 100 acres of land from his father for \$150. The land, in the post office district of Cherry Creek (now Fennell), adjoined the eastern half of the original 200-acre Clement homestead to the south. The next year, 23-year-old James married 17-year-old Martha Willson,⁵ another UE Loyalist descendant, the middle daughter of neighbours on a 100-acre farm two concessions to the north called "The Maples" (*Genealogy* 3, 14). These neighbours, Hiram and Caroline Willson,

had been members of the Quaker breakaway group, Children of Peace, centred in Sharon, Ontario; they had moved 20 kilometres north to Innisfil Township in 1840 (Kirk 14–16). The Willson's oldest daughter, Louise, married Daniel Lundy of Whitchurch Township at about the same time, for in 1854 Louise bore her first child at the age of 23: the Alberta who would become the mother of Mazo de la Roche (Hambleton, *Mazo* 70). (Thus Caroline Clement's Aunt Louise was Mazo de la Roche's "Grandma Lundy.") Daughter Martha, who was "almost wildly romantic, high-tempered and extravagant" (*Ringing* 20), but also "loving" and "genial" ("The death"), would not begin to bear children for 18 years.

For 14 years, while he operated his first farm, James Clement mortgaged it three times for dramatically-increasing amounts.⁶ Perhaps he was buying horses. Meanwhile, like the fictional Renny Whiteoak, James (doubtless with Martha's help) would have helped raise his youngest siblings, because James' mother died in 1857 (Rhodes), leaving five children not yet fully grown—aged eight, nine, 11, 15, and 17.⁷ Then in 1866, James sold his land outright for \$1580 and bought a 96-acre property three concessions to the north in the post office district of Churchill.⁸ The property was uncleared and unfenced; it consisted mainly of bush (*Township* 162). Perhaps the couple wanted to be farther from the Clements and closer to the Willsons, for brother-in-law Wellington Willson was now diagonally across the Concession 4 road to the northwest (*Genealogy* 4), while father-in-law Hiram was diagonally across the Yonge Street road to the southeast (*Assessment Innisfil*). James' new property was 96 acres rather than 100 because a previous owner, Colonel George Duggan, had donated four acres to create St. Peter's Anglican Church in the 1850s (*St. Peter's*). In the 1920s, this church would become the model for the fictional Whiteoaks' church.⁹ In the late 1860s, James and Martha lived above and ran the picturesque, red-brick Churchill store, built in the 1820s (*Township* 167). The store was located on the northwest corner of Concession 4 and Yonge Street. It still stood in 2004.

In 1870, James sold the 96 acres of bush to his father for \$2000. He probably used this money to pay a debt, for during the next four or five years, while he worked as an innkeeper in nearby Bell Ewart and then more distant Bracebridge, he only rented accommodation, although Martha bore their first two children at this time.¹⁰ Even after James' father divided the 96 acres and willed 50 acres of it back to James and 46 acres to a brother (Lewis), James did not make this property his home. Perhaps he was angry

with his father, for cynically on August 15, 1874, James sold his 50 acres to two Bracebridge men, James Langdon and Jacob Dill, for one dollar.¹¹ Evidently he owed the men money. In fact, legally James could not sell his 50 acres because a provision in his father's will stipulated that all of the old patriarch's land gifts must go first to his children and then, upon his children's deaths, to their children. After Lewis James Clement's death in 1873, James or his brother Lewis rented the 50 acres to tenants more or less continuously until 1899 (*Assessment Innisfil*). In 1899, one half of these 50 acres became important to Caroline Clement.

Meanwhile in 1874 James Clement was seeing signs of the 1874–78 Canadian Depression and in 1876 he was reading stories about General Custer's defeat at Little Big Horn, Montana (Brown 339, 349, 350). The Dakota Territory must have seemed an exciting place of opportunity to an enterprising, impecunious fellow with mounting domestic responsibilities; in August of 1877, James Clement made his way to Grand Forks. There, on September 5, 1877, he signed a formal declaration of his intention to "renounce forever" the "Queen of England" and become a US citizen (Slater, *United*). Meanwhile Martha and the children stayed behind in Simcoe County at "The Maples," where her recently widowed mother Caroline Willson and her brother Lambert Willson were living.¹² The unpretentious but substantial two-storey Willson home—a wooden frame with a stuccoed, white exterior—is likely where Caroline Louise Clement was born nine months after her father's departure (*Genealogy*, photo "3rd Line Farm"). Although no record of Caroline Clement's birthdate is available in the Ontario Archives, and all church records for the parish and period of her birth were lost in a fire (Rhodes), several sources give her birthday as April 4.¹³ Five other documents (three census listings, a will, and a land instrument) prove beyond a doubt that Clement's birth year was 1878. Caroline Clement was nine months older than Mazo de la Roche, who was born Mazo Louise Roche in Newmarket, Ontario on January 15, 1879 (Hambleton, *Secret* 40). Thus, biographers of de la Roche were wrong to suppose that Caroline Clement was six or more years younger than her cousin (Hambleton, *Secret* 62; Givner 18). De la Roche herself was untruthful when she said Martha Clement was "almost fifty" when Caroline was born (*Ringling* 20); Martha was 42.

Caroline Clement emigrated to the United States while still a "delicate infant" (*Ringling* 20). The 1880 US Census lists Clement and her immediate family as living in Grand Forks, Dakota Territory.¹⁴ Although Caroline lived in Grand Forks for only about seven years, James Clement lived there

continuously for about twelve years, Martha for about eleven years.¹⁵ Caroline learned to sew and read in Grand Forks (*Ringing* 7), and she must have experienced a fairly normal home life in many ways, for later she proved to be an ordinary, self-confident, practical young woman (*Ringing* 7–9, 58; Hambleton, *Secret* 63; Givner 46, 57). Furthermore, she always retained a happy memory of her parents “singing tunefully together” (*Ringing* 20). Yet Caroline also experienced upheavals, as others have mentioned (Hambleton, *Mazo* 99; Givner 47). Caroline’s parents, James and Martha, experienced euphoria, grief, and humiliation.

In 1879, as the great Dakota land boom got underway (State 8, 9; Remele), James Clement made what must have seemed like an excellent investment. He acquired 160 acres of land that, because it had originally been granted as Military Bounty to a veteran of the “Florida War” in 1856 (Eide; National), was not isolated in the wilderness. Clement’s new/old land was on the edge of the original downtown area of Grand Forks, about two blocks from the railroad tracks and a depot building, one block from two churches (Byzewski, 19 Dec.). Surely the land would increase in value as the village grew. Meanwhile, the family was not roughing it in a sod hut miles from the nearest neighbour. James Clement received final title to the land in October 1882, the same month he took out a mortgage of \$600 with Emma D. Skidmore of St. Paul, Minnesota (National; Hanzal, “Skidmore”). Now James enjoyed some productive creativity, for nine months later, on May 25, 1883, he made the front page of the local newspaper because he had invented a new type of ditch-digging machine and patented it in the US and Canada (“New”). Within three weeks of this positive publicity, on June 13, 1883, James was borrowing money again: this time \$500, in effect a second mortgage on his land held by a local man named Diedrich Bahn (Hanzal, “Bahn”). James probably needed the money to finance a scheme to capitalize on his invention.

Then personal tragedy struck and James’ credit rating plummeted. In 1882 or 1883, James’ daughter Mary died at the age of 11.¹⁶ During the next two years, James did not keep up with his mortgage payments, so the sheriff seized his land. At ten o’clock on the morning of July 11, 1885, Sheriff James K. Swan sold James Clement’s land in front of the Court House in Grand Forks to the highest bidder, Emma Skidmore, who offered \$959. Stubbornly, James refused to vacate the land, undoubtedly promising rental payments to the new owner. Three years later, Skidmore lost patience with James “and Martha” for not paying their rent and not leaving her land. She asked the

sheriff to evict them; Swan did so on October 29, 1888 (Hanzal, "Indenture"). For a few months James (and Martha?) lingered in Grand Forks, boarding with and working for a prominent young farmer named J. D. Bacon, but he soon returned to Simcoe County, Canada.¹⁷ James had abandoned his marvellous machine on the American prairie (*Ringing* 20).

Caroline was not with her parents when they returned home. Caroline had been brought back to Canada by her mother several years earlier; the following social note appeared in the *Grand Forks Daily Herald* of December 8, 1886: "Mrs. James Clement and two children left for Toronto, Ont. today to spend the winter." Given that Caroline was only eight years old, she was undoubtedly one of the two children mentioned, although by then she may have had a younger brother.¹⁸ Caroline was brought to the Newmarket home of her uncle and aunt, Daniel and Louise Lundy, in the first week of January 1887, and the Lundys took care of Clement for the next few years. Mazo de la Roche begins her autobiography with an account of the arrival of Clement "that January day" when de la Roche was "seven" (*Ringing*, 3–9, 51–59). De la Roche implies that she and Clement were not separated again after their initial meeting until de la Roche and her parents moved temporarily to Galt. De la Roche turned eight on January 15, 1887, and she says that the meeting took place within the Christmas season while she and her parents were visiting from Toronto (*Ringing* 5). De la Roche says Caroline came with de la Roche's "Uncle George" (George Lundy, Daniel and Louise Lundy's second son) and father (William Roche); she also says that she and her parents were visiting from Toronto. The social column of the Newmarket newspaper confirms that "Mr. Wm. Roche" and "Mr. Geo. H. Lundy," both "from Toronto," were visiting relatives in Newmarket that Christmas ("Social"). Likely the visitors stayed longer than usual to help Daniel and Louise Lundy endure the first anniversary of the death of their first son, Frank, killed January 14, 1886 in a terrible accident at the sawmill in Newmarket where Daniel Lundy was foreman ("Fearful"). Possibly the loss of one child was a motive for the temporary adoption of another child. Undoubtedly two happy little girls who played together well were easier to take care of than one unhappy little girl who was lonely and bored. De la Roche does not specify where this Lundy home was, but her description of the house being "high above the road" with a "steep terrace" fits their house in Newmarket, which still exists today on Prospect Street, on a terraced height of land above the railway track and a park. The Lundys moved to Orillia in 1888 (*Assessment* 1889). Neither of the streets in Orillia they

lived on—Mary Street and Coldwater Road—has such topography. (Nor do the streets in Orillia that the Clements later lived on—Brant and Front.)

That Martha Clement could have left her eight-year-old daughter behind when she returned to Grand Forks is plausible in light of the Clements' 1885 economic disaster. That Caroline Clement did indeed experience such a separation at such a young age is also confirmed indirectly by Clement. "I was brought up in such an atmosphere of tobacco smoke and people older than myself that I always seemed to be running in and out of hard legs and being snatched and thrown up into the air by somebody with a beard," Clement told Hambleton (*Mazo* 99). This early memory is of a relaxed, extended family such as lived in the Ontario homes of Daniel Lundy,¹⁹ not of a tense, immediate family such as lived in the Dakota home of James Clement. Hambleton reported: "Caroline scarcely remembers her parents. . . . As a child Caroline was sent to stay with relatives . . . they 'didn't like children at all. . . .' The Clements as a family . . . were cold" (*Mazo* 112). Presumably Caroline was brought to the Lundys after a brief stay at a branch of the Clement family: likely the household of Dr. and Mrs. Lewis Clement in Bradford, West Gwillimbury Township, Ontario. Lewis Clement, M.D., James Clement's only childless sibling, was already co-operating with James by administering the rental of their adjoining land holdings in Churchill, and later Lewis would virtually adopt the son of a widowed sister, leaving money and property to him as well as to two other nephews and a niece (*Assessment Innisfil*, 1879–1899; Clement, Lewis). A January 1887 Barrie newspaper mentions that diphtheria was "prevalent" in West Gwillimbury ("Captured"), so Dr. Clement would have been busy and worried about his niece contracting the disease. A lengthy passage in de la Roche's *Growth of a Man* describes the visit of a fictional child, Shaw Manifold, to the childless home of a Doctor "Clemency" whose wife is sickly (114–120); this passage could be based on a brief stay by little Caroline in the home of Dr. Clement.

There is further evidence for Caroline Clement's being separated from her parents and taken in by the Lundys when she was young. Clement told her adopted niece, Esmee Rees, that she "hardly knew" her brother because he lived in the United States. Rees understood that Clement's brother lived in Detroit, Michigan as an adult and married an American (12 Aug.; 10 Jan.), but in these last details Rees was mistaken. James Harvey Clement only lived in the United States during his childhood and youth, when he resided with his parents in Grand Forks; thereafter, he lived in Orillia and Brantford, Ontario ("Serious"; "To the Grave"). Joan Givner's belief that

James Harvey Clement moved to the United States as an adult (46, 249) was based on her interviews with Rees and a 1909 newspaper article about the diamond wedding anniversary of Wellington Willson, one of Martha Clement's older brothers. This article stated that "Harvey of Buffalo, a steamboat engineer," attended the anniversary. But James Harvey Clement never lived in Buffalo, NY and was never a steamboat engineer (Kennedy; Messmer). The "Harvey" referred to in the 1909 report was undoubtedly James Harvey Willson, a son of Wellington Willson who did live in Buffalo and who was "an engineer on the lakes" ("J. Wellington," 513). Thus, when Caroline Clement told her niece that James Harvey Clement lived in the United States, she was referring to a separation during her childhood between 1886 and 1889. If Clement deliberately gave Rees the impression that her brother lived in the US as an adult, she was prevaricating in order to hide something embarrassing.

In 1889 when James Clement returned to Simcoe County, he did not settle on his 50 acres near his Clement siblings and Willson in-laws,²⁰ but rather 65 kilometres farther north in Orillia. Since James Clement only rented part of a house in Orillia and since he and his son, James Harvey, both worked there as humble pail makers, James was obviously in straitened circumstances, so why did he settle so far from his land and family? Likely he did so because Martha's sister, Louise Lundy, was living in Orillia. Since Louise had been taking care of Caroline for several years, when her parents arrived the girl would have been well settled in Orillia and reluctant to leave. Moreover, Louise's husband, Daniel, foreman of the Thomson Brothers woodenware factory in Orillia—known locally as the "Old Pail Factory" (Sarjeant)—could find jobs for James and his son.²¹ James could expect to obtain mainly scorn from his own brothers and sisters. While James had been losing his 160 acres and his reputation in the Dakota Territory, his closest brother Stephen had been gaining 640 acres and prestige in Manitoba. Stephen, father of eight children who survived to adulthood, had gone West one year after James but had not renounced the Queen; Stephen had become the first representative of Shoal Lake and Russell for the Manitoba legislature and the first sheriff of the Western Judicial District of Manitoba.²² James' next brother, Lewis, had become wealthy from his medical practice in Bradford (Clement, Lewis). Of course James' sister Catherine was now a poor widow, but Catherine retained the prestige of being Mrs. Thomas McConkey. McConkey, a Barrie merchant, had become Sheriff of Simcoe County and member for North Simcoe of the federal

parliament in Ottawa.²³ And Joseph and David, unambitious farmers who never left the original 200-acre homestead that their father gave them, each had 100 acres to leave to his heirs (Clement, Joseph; Clement, David), as did little sisters Sarah and Abigail, both married women by this time.²⁴ Even illiterate Joseph had achieved local prestige by marrying a relative of Sir John A. MacDonald (Clement, Joseph; *Township* 33). James' siblings—the “cold” Clements—would have regarded their big brother as an awful bungler.

James' household in Orillia was not happy. Caroline is listed as being enrolled in the Orillia Public School only once, at the age of 15, in October 1893. Presumably the illness mentioned by de la Roche in her autobiography had held Clement back; de la Roche did not specify whether the illness was physical or emotional.²⁵ De la Roche herself had been enrolled in the same school at the age of 13 in September of the previous year, 1892.²⁶ Even though Caroline now lived officially with her parents and brother, she would have escaped often to the nearby Lundys to have fun with Mazo. De la Roche and her mother would have stayed from time to time in William Roche's various temporary lodgings in Toronto during the period 1888 to 1894, and they stayed more than one year with him in a Galt hotel around 1891.²⁷ But de la Roche would have regarded Orillia as her principal home for about six years. De la Roche did not mention the Orillia years in her autobiography, and they went undetected by her biographers. Hambleton implied that neither Clement nor de la Roche ever lived with the Lundys in Orillia, and that the Lundys' stay in that city was brief (*Mazo* 98). But the City of Orillia knew that de la Roche had lived there; indeed, in 1966, the year Hambleton's first biography was published, the city inducted her into the Orillia Hall of Fame (“Orillia”). The Orillia Museum says that de la Roche attended a private school run by a Miss Cecile Lafferty, later Mrs. Gerhardt Dryer, wife of Orillia's chief of police, and that the school was located on Coldwater Road (Sarjeant). Likely Clement attended the same private school (*Ringing* 55). De la Roche also attended the high school in Orillia (“Orillia”; Sarjeant).

Actually Caroline Clement revealed the Orillia secret when she told Hambleton about spending summer holidays on Strawberry Island (*Mazo*, 113, 114), but Hambleton did not recognize the clue. Clement even mentioned the island's original, English-language name, known only to Orillia old-timers: “Starvation Island” (Lajeunesse). Strawberry Island, in Lake Simcoe, is near Orillia. Since the 1920s it has belonged to the Catholic Church (Lajeunesse), and in 2002 it became briefly famous for providing healthful, safely remote

accommodation for the frail Pope John Paul II during World Youth Day in Toronto. Until World War I, the tiny island was a popular summer destination for Orillians because they could take a brief ferry ride there for a single-day excursion. There was no place on the island for the general public to stay overnight (Lajeunesse). The game Clement and de la Roche played on the island—discovering a cave and playing *Robinson Crusoe* and *Friday*—indicates that the girls were pre-adolescent. Thus their earliest Strawberry Island excursions undoubtedly predate the Galt year(s) and go back to 1888–1890.



Caroline on fence

photo courtesy of Benares Historic House, Bianca de la Roche, and the estate of Mazon de la Roche

Knowing that de la Roche was 15 when she moved in 1894 to Toronto to live with the Lundys, biographers struggled to account for de la Roche's child-like behaviour at the time of her supposed reunion with Clement in *Toronto* after de la Roche had been away with her parents in Galt.²⁸ But the reunion actually took place in Orillia in 1891 or 1892. Not wanting to admit she and Clement had lived in unsophisticated Orillia, de la Roche did some splicing to create the scene where the pair walk down to a lake together and begin again their "play." Grandfather Lundy's homes in Orillia's West Ward and Toronto's westerly Parkdale district were all only a few blocks from a large lake, so de la Roche could allude vaguely to an unnamed "city" and "west end" and "lake" and give the impression of being in Toronto beside Lake Ontario instead of Orillia beside Lake Couchiching or Lake Simcoe.

Caroline Clement probably went to live with the Lundys in Toronto soon after her father died. His death occurred on August 27, 1894. He was 64 years old.²⁹ He had left his wife Martha, 59, and surviving children, James Harvey 21 and Caroline Louise 16, with little means, for Martha never again owned a home and her children's main material legacy was the 50 acres willed to them by their paternal grandfather (Hambleton, *Secret* 70). According to a provision of Lewis James Clement's will, this land could go to James' children only when the youngest of them turned 21. James Harvey and Caroline

Louise took possession of this inheritance in 1899, when Caroline turned 21. They sold the land in November of that year for \$600.³⁰ Presumably they split the profit evenly. By that time Caroline had been living in Toronto for about five years in the Lundy home. The Lundys had moved to that city in 1894 when Daniel became mechanical supervisor of the woodworking shop at Central Prison (“After”). Also living in the Lundy home during this period were Mazo de la Roche, her parents, and assorted uncles and aunts (*Ringing* 80; Hambleton *Mazo* 99). Meanwhile, Caroline’s mother and brother may have lived together in Orillia for a while, but by 1901 Martha Clement was boarding with her younger sister, Mary (Willson) Rogerson, in Lefroy, Innisfil Township. James Harvey Clement was living in Brantford with the Orillia girl he had married, Mary Coulson.³¹

After Daniel Lundy died in 1900, Caroline Clement lived with de la Roche and de la Roche’s parents, William and Alberta Roche, in various locations in southern Ontario, including three or four years in Acton, where the Roches ran a hotel (Givner 69–78), and four years in Bronte, where the Roches tried farming (Hambleton, *Mazo* 101–111; *Secret* 59–69). Clement, aged 33, was living in Bronte when her mother died suddenly of “heart failure” in November 1911 in nearby Brantford. The death was “most unexpected” because the “deceased was apparently in fair health” (“The death”). Martha Clement was “found dead in bed.”³² At age 75, Martha had just moved into a small, square, one-storey, white-brick cottage at 10 Duke Street, Brantford, rented for her by her son (Bowman). Martha’s life was celebrated with two funeral services. The first was held in the home of her son, James Harvey, at 37 Brighton Row in Brantford. Her body was then transported by train to Innisfil Township. After a second service at the Lefroy home of her sister Mary, Martha’s body was buried beside that of her husband in the Clement Cemetery (“The funeral”).³³ Thus, Martha Clement did not die one year after her husband, as Hambleton and Rees believed (*Mazo* 70; Rees 12 Aug.), and there is no reason to suppose she had a chronic mental or physical illness, as Givner believed (46).³⁴

According to a Bronte neighbour, Caroline Clement worked “like a slave for the Roches,” using her “common sense” and “clearest eye” for the “practical work” of raising animals and crops, occupations at which the Roches were inexperienced (Hambleton, *Secret* 63). So Clement too would have worked hard in the hotel and in the Roche’s various homes. A hint of her industriousness appears in *Lark Ascending*, a non-Jalna novel written as soon as the Jalna series was well established, which dealt with Clement’s hitherto

unacknowledged contributions to de la Roche's success. One of the protagonists in this novel is Josie Froward, the hard-working cousin of lazy, self-centred young painter Diego Vargas. Josie lives with and works for Diego's equally self-centred mother, Fay. In *Lark Ascending*, Josie "carried herself with an air of stubborn courage as though she were in the habit of undertaking more than her strength was equal to, and carrying it through" (12). Josie runs a bakery and sells antiques to support Fay and Diego. The period from about 1900 to 1915 may be seen both as an extended childhood for Clement (she was now being protected by de la Roche's parents), and as an experimental adulthood (she was now trying innkeeping and farming, occupations which her parents had tried, and exploring southern Ontario, the region from which her parents had fled). Clement would have wanted to understand why her father had failed financially and avoid his mistakes. As well as working hard, Clement was showing leadership within her adopted family.

Clement's psychological strength is a recurring theme in de la Roche's autobiography, *Ringed the Changes*. In de la Roche's account of their first meeting, Clement pooh-poohs the fears of sheltered, indulged, only-child de la Roche, who has been spooked by a mere stuffed owl in her grandmother's house (6, 7). In her description of her nervous breakdown in her twenties, de la Roche credits Clement with helping her recover. Clement held de la Roche in her arms "when despair threatened." Later, when de la Roche was recuperating, Clement walked with her and participated in the "play" (122, 135, 136). After the bankruptcy, decline, and death of William Roche in 1914-15, Clement supported de la Roche and her mother emotionally and financially. Clement faced "those difficult days" with "gallant resolution" and became "the principal pillar" of their "little household," securing positions in the provincial government (173). Indeed, Clement was the household's chief wage earner until *Jalna* won the \$10,000 Atlantic Little Brown prize in 1927 and the book's huge sales made the regular government salary unnecessary (226). When de la Roche had another breakdown in 1928, Clement devoted herself to ensuring that de la Roche finish the first sequel to *Jalna*, *Whiteoaks of Jalna*. Clement "massaged [her] temples and neck" and took dictation when de la Roche could not write, helping de la Roche "accomplish much more" and giving her "confidence" in herself (226, 231). During their life in England, Clement not only dealt with the practical aspects of running their household but also worked on manuscripts. For example, at their Devon farmhouse, "Seckington," Clement worried about wallpaper and furnishings, typed *Portrait of a Dog*, and made "an admirable

condensed version of it for an American magazine” (244, 245). Finally, at the end of her autobiography, de la Roche declared that it was Clement “who [had] always made [their] decisions” (331).

De la Roche’s repeated assertion in *Ringling* that Clement was the leader of the two, yet a sensitive partner in de la Roche’s creative processes, able to set aside her dominating nature and lose herself in de la Roche’s imaginings, is supported by other sources. The presence of both women’s handwriting, turn and turn about, on the original manuscript of *Whiteoaks of Jalna* (Hambleton, *Secret* 27), provides physical evidence that Clement must have harmonized exquisitely with the temperamental de la Roche. Then too Esmee Rees has said: “I know Caroline had considerable influence on the creation of the Jalna novels. They read the manuscript over every day. Caroline would never take credit for anything. She didn’t push herself forward” (10 Jan.). Joan Givner observed that although many superficial acquaintances described Clement as “sweet,” considerable evidence shows she was actually “bossy” (228). But Clement’s “hold” on de la Roche was not necessarily sexual, as Givner implied (3), for Clement could provide sound judgement, like a good editor. In *Ringling the Changes*, de la Roche describes Clement as “receptive as a crystal goblet held beneath a tap” (52). In *Lark Ascending*, de la Roche says Diego “had the ability to create” and Josie “knew she did not have it. But she had the power to interpret what he created. She could take his formless, ill-judged creations and build them up,

coax them into a kind of serenity, so they satisfied the senses, not tormented them” (15, 16).

Givner made the same mistake as did Pierre Fritz Mansbendel, a suitor of de la Roche who underestimated Clement’s intelligence and seriousness: “Because she was small and blond and pretty he thought of her as frivolous—ignoring her cool, critical quality. Once, when she picked up a book of essays he had been reading, he took it from her with a curt, ‘But, my dear, you would not yet understand this,’ and deeply offended her” (*Ringling* 147).



photo courtesy of Benares Historic House, Blanca de la Roche, and the estate of Mazo de la Roche

Mazo and Caroline in 1934

Caroline may not have received a good education, but she had a good mind. Hambleton obviously thought this too, for he commented, “Caroline’s role throughout their long life together was that of protector, housekeeper, typist, hostess, *critic*” (emphasis mine). He then quoted a de la Roche letter: “And beside all her tender qualities she is the backbone of my work, as it were. She has a far better critical mind than I” (*Mazo* 115). Hambleton’s (and de la Roche’s) assessment that Clement was astute is reinforced by her rising from clerk-typist to Chief Statistician in the Fire Marshall’s office of the government of Ontario (Hambleton, *Mazo* 101–112, *Secret* 70). Furthermore, many of her relatives were also bright and successful.

Caroline Clement often mentioned to her adopted niece and nephew that her paternal grandfather, Lewis James Clement, had been a judge (Rees, 12 Aug.). But her maternal grandfather, Hiram Robinson Willson, had been also a justice of the peace as well as captain of the local militia (*Township* 115). And a number of earlier forebears had been military officers or religious leaders (Kirk 13–18). Furthermore, within Caroline Clement’s own generation, many men in her family were successful professionals, and several were brilliant. Her first cousins included engineers, druggists, lawyers, and a forester; one druggist also served as an alderman, and one lawyer also served as an alderman and judge.³⁵ Another lawyer—Stephen, third son of Stephen, who bore a strong physical resemblance to Caroline Clement—was an alderman for the city of Brandon, Manitoba; the mayor of Brandon; a member of the Manitoba provincial legislature; a long-time, county-court judge; and a director of many organizations.³⁶ The forester was Harvey Reginald Macmillan, educated at the Guelph agricultural college and Yale University, co-founder of the giant British Columbia forestry company, Macmillan Bloedel (“Harvey”; “J. Willson” 513). These conspicuous accomplishments of Caroline Clement’s near relations increase the likelihood that she herself was not only brainy but also ambitious. Actually, the name-dropping in which Clement indulged and the upper-class English accent which she affected throughout her 1964 interview with Hambleton, provide evidence that she was obsessed with the notion of high social position. This obsession would have stemmed from her immediate family not having done well by comparison to her extended family, for her brother had failed as spectacularly as her father. James Harvey Clement had become foreman of the Verity Plow Company; he had also been elected an alderman in the city of Brantford (“To the Grave”). But as his first term as alderman came to a close, James Harvey had blown himself up figuratively like a suicide bomber.

In May 1919, several nasty stories about James Harvey appeared on the front page of his local newspaper. In the first story, George Tomlin, an employee of the Verity Plow Company, accused Alderman J. H. Clement of taking a bribe for an exemption from military duty during World War I. In the second story, Magistrate Livingston acquitted Alderman Clement of Tomlin's charge, but the acquittal was suspicious because the trial took place before Tomlin's lawyer could reach the court ("Serious"; "Honorable"). Eight months later, Alderman Clement was bad news again. On December 31, 1919, the evening of his sudden death at the age of 46, Clement was guzzling bootlegged liquor during a period of prohibition while on alderman's business. Warden McCann testified that he had accepted a single drink from Clement's bottle that evening when Clement came to his home. McCann was not sickened by the bottle's contents, which he described as "ordinary rye whisky." But Clement drank so much from his bottle that Mayor MacBride, with whom Clement also conferred in a downtown Brantford restaurant, the Devonshire Cafe, had to help him leave the restaurant. Just beyond the door, Clement slid unconscious onto the sidewalk. Mayor MacBride, who testified that he himself was a total abstainer from alcohol because of a medical condition, asked a passing acquaintance, P.C. Gillen, to take Clement home in a taxi. Gillen and the taxi driver carried Clement into his home, placed him on a couch, realized he was dead, and called Dr. Philips. At the inquest into Clement's death, the coroner, Dr. Fissette, remarked that Clement's stomach "showed a pathological condition," and that it "had been insulted by alcohol." Fissette concluded that "death was due to heart failure, and the contributory cause alcoholism" ("Adjournment"; "Regret"). If Caroline Clement told people that her brother had lived in Detroit, Michigan, she was deflecting attention away from the small Canadian town where the shameful end of Alderman Clement was public knowledge. Perhaps she had similar motives for maintaining silence about her early years with her parents in Grand Forks and Orillia (Rees 10 Jan.).

The hidden life of Caroline Clement was her family life, which biographers did not probe. The sex life that Joan Givner discovered was quite possibly a product of Givner's imagination. Elspeth Cameron and Clara Thomas both have said that, given the period in which Clement and de la Roche lived, the pair were probably not sexually active. I myself am unconvinced by Givner's arguments.³⁷ I am suspicious when Givner does not cite medical authorities for generalizations like, "Such collapses of health and identity are usually reflected in erratic sexual behaviour" (64). I disagree with Givner's pro-

nouncement that de la Roche made “gender problems” central to Finch’s nervous breakdowns (65, 66). I fail to see sexual explicitness in the *Jalna* passages that Givner labels “erotic” (49, 50). I think Givner should give more weight to the statements she quotes by Lovat Dickson and Esmee Rees, people who knew the women well and who felt that they were not active lesbians (142, 211). In any case, Clement was obviously not victimized by de la Roche, as Givner implied (17). On the contrary, given Clement’s seniority and leadership—and the cynicism displayed by her father and brother—it is possible that de la Roche was victimized by Clement.



photo courtesy of Benares Historic House, Banca de la Roche, and the estate of Mazo de la Roche

Caroline in 1937

But there is no reason to believe that victimization was part of their relationship. Because they were born only nine months apart and raised together from childhood, their relationship would have been symbiotic. De la Roche found in Clement not only subject matter but also reason to live. Hambleton was correct when he commented, “Caroline Clement was almost Mazo’s other self. These two dissimilar but perfectly attuned persons lived one of the most unusual and certainly most productive partnerships in the history of literature” (*Mazo* 16). Exiled from her extended and immediate families, Clement was an outsider who wanted in. Humiliated by the failures of her father and brother, she was a low-life who wanted up. Like her mother, she was an invisible partner. Like her father, she was an audacious entrepreneur. Caroline Clement was the ingenious person who developed and maintained an amazing writing machine that got her what she wanted. Through fiction, her 25 acres became 1,000. She became as wealthy and powerful as Grandfather Clement and Captain Philip Whiteoak.

NOTES

- 1 The Internet gave me an advantage over Givner. Also, I was able to probe relatively inexpensively because I live in Simcoe County. I owe thanks to many local people not mentioned in “Works Cited.” These include Sharon Bunn, Director, Family History Center,

- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Barrie; Information Services Staff, Barrie Public Library; Gail Lucas, longtime Innisfil Township resident; Ellen Millar, Assistant Archivist, SCA; Peter Moran, former Archivist, SCA; Staff, LRO. I also owe thanks to Kathy Lowinger of Tundra Books who recommended me for a Writers' Reserve grant from the Ontario Arts Council to write a book about Mazo de la Roche for young people.
- 2 Clement, Lewis James; *Township* 33. Mary Jane was born first, then James, Stephen, Lewis, Joseph, Catherine, David, Robert, Sarah, and Abigail, in that order. Most of the children were close in age, so there was probably much sibling rivalry. Mary Jane was born 4 Aug. 1828, while James was born 25 June 1830, and Stephen was born 30 Jan. 1832 (Rhodes). Hambleton lists the children in the wrong order (*Mazo* 70); he also mistakenly says that James "was the sixth of the ten children" (*Secret* 51).
 - 3 Hunter II, 53; *Township* 32,33; Kirk 16, 17. Hambleton mistakenly says Lewis James Clement came "to Canada from the United States in 1829" (*Secret* 51).
 - 4 *Assessment Innisfil* 1864–1874; *Township* 167; *Directory* 19, 63.
 - 5 *Ringing* 19. *Census* 1901, District No. 115, Simcoe South, Township of Innisfil, Division No. 3, enumerated April 1901, page [?], family no. [?]: Rogerson, Richard, "head"; Rogerson, Mary, "wife" . . . Clement, Martha, "lodger," born "Feb. 25, 1836" in "Ontario," age "65."
 - 6 Instrument Nos. 11253, 19404, 29175, 29176, 35558, 35659, and 41989 for S ½ Lot 17, Con. 1, Township of Innisfil (LRO).
 - 7 *Census 1861 Innisfil*, District No. 1, page 11, lines no. 17–19; page 13, lines no. 1–7. This census shows one of James' younger brothers, Joseph, living with James and Martha in their separate house on their separate farm. It also shows James' 12-year-old sister, Abigail, going by the name "Martha." It gives Joseph's age as 25, but a record for Joseph's marriage indicates that he was 27 when he married in 1867, so he would have been 17 when his mother died and 21 when the 1861 census was taken (*inGeneas*).
 - 8 Instrument No. 45943 for N ½ Lot 15, Con. 3, Innisfil (LRO).
 - 9 Of course, Hambleton thought the model was St. Peter's Anglican Church in Erindale (now Mississauga), several kilometres north of Benares (*Mazo* 66; *Secret*, 78, 79), at the corner of Dundas Street and Mississauga Road. Hiram and Caroline Willson, the maternal grandparents of Caroline Clement and great-grandparents of Mazo de la Roche, are buried in the cemetery of the St. Peter's in Innisfil Township. The fictional Whiteoak cemetery is a combination of this cemetery and the Clement Cemetery a few kilometres away, where Caroline's parents, paternal grandparents, and several great-aunts of de la Roche are buried (Kirk 18, 19).
 - 10 *Ontario Births*. MS 929, Reel 4, No. 00787: Mary Elizabeth Clement, born 1 Sept. 1871 in Innisfil Township. *Census* 1871, District No. 41, South Simcoe, Township of Innisfil, Division No. 2, page 91[?], family no. 255. Instruments for Lot 23, Con. 4 (LRO). *Ontario Births*. MS 929, Reel 11, No. 013051: James Harvey Clement, born 8 Mar. 1873 in Macaulay Township, Muskoka. Aoaki. I do not know where James Clement was between 1875 and August 1877.
 - 11 Instrument No. 79217 for N ½ Lot 15, Con. 3, Township of Innisfil (LRO).
 - 12 *Assessment Innisfil*, 1879, entries 167, 168, 169 for S ½ Lot 16, Con. 3.
 - 13 *Genealogy*, 17, gives Clement's birthday as April 4, 1879. The Statement of Death, filled in by Clement's adopted nephew, Rene de la Roche, gives Clement's date of birth as April 4, 1889!
 - 14 In the family are father James, "carpenter"; mother Martha, "keeping house"; older sister Mary, eight; older brother James Harvey, seven; Caroline, two. Caroline's birth year is listed as 1878. Everyone's birth place is listed as Canada. That this listing is indeed that of the family of the Caroline Clement, cousin of Mazo de la Roche, can be proven by comparing the handwriting and signature on James Clement's 1877 declaration with

- those on papers related to the probation in 1873 of the will of Lewis James Clement.
- 15 Hambleton mistakenly says that James Clement “took off on [intermittent] jaunts to the United States” (*Secret* 51).
 - 16 *Ringling* 20. *Genealogy* 17. No record of Mary’s death or burial is available today from church, cemetery or government sources in Grand Forks (Byzewski, 21 Dec.; Wittman, 19 Dec.). Likely she was buried on her father’s land. I could find no mention of Mary’s death in the *Grand Forks Daily Herald* newspapers between 1 Sept. 1882 and 1 Sept. 1883 (fiches borrowed from State Archives, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck, ND).
 - 17 “Personal.” *Grand Forks Daily Herald* 4 Dec. 1886: 4; fiche. Slater, *Grand* 1889–90; 1891–2. *Assessment Innisfil* 1890, entry no. 185, indicates that James Clement was residing in Orillia for at least part of the year 1889.
 - 18 Sometime between June 1885 and May 1891, the youngest child of James and Martha Clement—not Caroline but Franklin—disappeared. I presume Franklin had died and was buried on his father’s forfeited land in Grand Forks. He is not mentioned on cemetery or vital-statistics records for Grand Forks (Byzewski, 21 Dec.; Wittman, 4 Mar.). Franklin is mentioned only on the Grand Forks census of June 1885 (Slater, *Inhabitants*). The four-year-old “Frank,” born 1881 in the Dakota Territory, is listed right after his seven-year-old sister, “Carrie,” born in Canada. Franklin is not mentioned on the 1891 Canadian census listing for his family. On this listing (see below), there is only James, 60; Martha, 55; “James,” 18; and “Caroline,” 13.
 - 19 *Ringling* 13; *Census 1891* District No. 116, Simcoe East, Town of Orillia, Division No.[?], enumerated 13 May 1891, page 5[?], family no. 81.
 - 20 Martha’s oldest brother, Wellington Willson, had moved to Aurora in 1883; her mother Caroline Willson had died in 1884. But Lambert Willson was still at The Maples, and Martha’s younger sister, Mary (Willson) Rogerson, who had a daughter about the same age as Caroline and Mazo, was just two kilometres away on a 100-acre farm near Lefroy. (*Genealogy* 1, 4, 18.)
 - 21 *Census 1891* District No. 116, Simcoe East; Town of Orillia, Division No.[?]; enumerated 13 May 1891, page 5[?]; family no. 81. *Assessment Orillia, West Ward*, 1889, entry no. 1077; 1890, no. 1127; 1891, no. 1265. “After.”
 - 22 Rutherford, *Crown*; Pressman; “Sheriff.” Stephen held the former position for two years and the latter for 19 years until his death in 1901.
 - 23 Clement, Lewis; Clement, Lewis James; Hunter II, 53, 61, 62.
 - 24 Clement, Lewis James; *Township* 33. According to their tombstones in the Clement Cemetery, James’ older sister Mary Jane had died at 14 in 1842, while his youngest brother Robert had died at 19 in 1867.
 - 25 *Ringling* 81, 82; *School*, entry 968. Caroline is registered as “Anne” Clement, daughter of James Clement, Front Street. Her name appears on another document, the 1899 land instrument mentioned below, as “Caroline A. Louise Clement,” so perhaps she was using the name Anne at this time to distinguish herself from her grandmother Caroline Willson and her aunt Louise Lundy. She also experimented with the spelling of “Caroline” when young, using the variant “Carolyn.” See the dedication, “To my dear Carolyn,” in de la Roche’s 1926 novel, *Delight*.
 - 26 *School*, entry 913. Mazo was enrolled on September 1, 1892. Her father is given as “Wm. Roche, Coldwater Road.” The 1892 and 1893 assessment rolls for Orillia do not list William Roche, but the 1893 roll lists Daniel Lundy as having lived in 1892 on Coldwater Road.
 - 27 Hambleton *Secret* 48. *Census 1891*, District No. 123, Waterloo South, Town of Galt, Division 1, enumerated 22 April, page 71, family no. 336.

- 28 *Ringing*, 80–82; Hambleton *Mazo* 99, 100; Hambleton *Secret* 51, 52, 53; Givner 45, 46.
- 29 The cause of James Clement's death is unknown to me. I could find no record of his death in Orillia or Barrie newspapers (fiches SCA) or in the Ontario Archives. His tombstone in the Clement Cemetery gives his date of death as August 27, 1894.
- 30 Instrument no. 6669 for N ½ Lot 15, Con. 3, Innisfil, dated 2 Nov. 1899 (LRO).
- 31 *Census 1901*; "Honourable"; "To the Grave." Martha Clement likely remained with her sister until at least 1909, for in the newspaper report about the anniversary of Wellington Willson, mentioned above, her address is given as Lefroy.
- 32 *Ontario: Deaths*. MS 935, Reel 162, No. 00776911: Martha Clement, Brantford, died 8 Nov. 1911.
- 33 The Clement Cemetery is on Lewis James Clement's original land grant and can be accessed by the public from Concession 2 of Innisfil Township, just east of County Road 4 (the old Yonge Street road, later Highway 11). Martha Clement's grave is unmarked, but visitors can see the small, grey, weathered, limestone marker for James Clement. It lies between the bigger, marble stones of his brothers Lewis and David — which remain easy to read— and the tall, white obelisk for James's parents and his brother Joseph. The obelisk is broken off at the top and its letters are worn. On the other side of the obelisk are the small, moss-covered stones of James' older sister, Mary Jane, and his youngest brother, Robert. I was assisted in deciphering the stones by Doreen Horton and what she termed the "Clement Cemetery Book." The stone inscriptions in this book were transcribed in 1973 by Ross Wallace.
- 34 There is no record of a Martha Clement having been admitted to the mental hospital in Orillia that was the only facility of the kind in Simcoe County in the 1880s and 1890s (Skinner).
- 35 Clement, David; "Obituary: Louis [sic] Clement"; "Obituary: Eleanor Clement"; "Obituary: Final Respects"; "William Dixon Clement"; "J. Willson" 513.
- 36 "S.E. Clement"; Hume 26, 27; Barker 93, 106, 109, 110, 121, 156, 160, 161, 208, 246, 283, 291. Compare the photo of Stephen in Hume 27 with the photo of Caroline in *Ringing* 120E.
- 37 Givner's biography inspired widely differing reactions. The *Globe and Mail* gave it positive, front-page treatment (Givner). CBC *Ideas* based a program on it (Givner). *Canadian Materials* called it a "splendid piece of literary detection" (Reimer). Subsequent biographer Daniel Bratton built on it unquestioningly. But Scott Symons declared that de la Roche had been "murdered." Robin Mathews condemned the biography as "seriously defective." Carole Gerson criticized Givner's "facile generalizations." Esmee Rees was "horrified" (Aug. 12).

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Abbreviations:

LRO Land Registry Office, Barrie, Ontario.

OA Ontario Archives, Toronto, Ontario.

SCA Simcoe County Archives, Midhurst, Ontario.

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